

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8670

INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 12787

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TGS: ENRG PFOR IS EG

SUBJECT: ALLEGED INTRUSION OF US OIL EXPLORATION SHIP

REF: A. TEL AVIV 7928 B. TEL AVIV 5541 C. CAIRO 8711

1. AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, WE HAVE RECEIVED DIFFERING VERSION OF INCIDENTS MENTIONED REFTEL, INVOLVING EXPLORATION VESSEL 'CARIBBEAN SEAL. SEAL, WHICH BELONGS TO GEOPHYSICAL SERVICES, INC. IS CONTRACTED OUT TO VARIOUS OIL COMPANES, AND WAS WORKING FOR AMOCO DURING PERIOD CITED (NOV 23-30).

2. AMOCO, WHICH, LIKE USG, DOES NOT RECOGNIZE EXISTENCE OF ANY "DEMARCATON LINE", ACKNOWLEDGES CONTACTS SPECIFIED REFTEL (ALTHOUGH ONLY IN GENERAL TERMS PENDING DETAILED VERIFICATION, PARTICULARLY LOCATIONS) AND COMPLAINS OF CONSIDERABLE ISRAELI HARASSMENT. COMPANY CLAIMS THAT CABLES BEING TOWED BY SEAL HAVE BEEN CUT ON SIX DIFFERENT OCCASIONS BY ISRAELI PATROL BOATS IN AREA SOUTH OF ABU RUDEIS, AND ONCE IN AREA TO NORTH, I.E. ABOVE AREA EVACUATED BY ISRAELIS IN NOVEMBER. LAST INCIDENT ALLEGEDLY OCCURRED PAST WEEKEND.

3. COMPANY REPORTS IT IS FINISHED WITH PRELIMINARY OFFSHORE EXPLORATION IN SOUTHERN AREA, FOR TIME BEING AT LEAST, AND WILL NOW RPT NOW BE CONCENTRATING ON NORTHERN GULF. PROBLEM HERE IS LACK OF INFORMATION AS TO PRESENCE/LOCATION OF
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POSSIBLE ISRAELI MINEFIELDS OR OTHER UNDERWATER OBSTACLES.

(AMOCO HAS INFORMALLY REQUESTED USG ASSISTANCE IN OBTAINING DETAILED RESPONSES TO THIS QUESTION, AND IS IN PROCESS OF PREPARING SPECIFIC OPERATIONAL MAPS TO SHOW AREAS OF OPERATIONS.

4. GAMASY TOLD AMBASSADOR YESTERDAY HE THOUGH A FRENCH VESSEL HAD BEEN INVOLVED. GOE HAD INSTRUCTED VESSEL TO RETURN TO AREA WHERE ISRAELIS ACCOSTED HER AND HAD ALSO SOME GUNBOATS NEARBY TO SHOW EGYPTIANS ARE NOT PREPARED TO BACK DOWN ON WHAT THEY REGARD AS THEIR RIGHT.

5. COMMENT. ISRAELIS APPEAR TO REMAIN INTERESTED IN SOME FORM OF PRIOR CONSULTATION OR NOTIFICATION ON THESE MATTERS, AS HAS BEEN SUGGESTED BEFORE (REFTEL B). WHILE WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT ANY PROCEDURE OF FORMAL NATURE WOULD NOT BE ACCEPTABLE TO EITHER GOE OR AMOCO, AND PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO AREA NORTH OF ABU RUDEIS, WE CONTINUE TO FEEL THAT SOME INFORMAL PROCEDURE, SUCH AS OUTLINED IN REFTEL C, MAY BE WAY TO GET AROUND THIS PROBLEM. WE HAVE NOT YET HEARD DEPARTMENT'S REACTION TO OUR PROPOSAL, WITH WHICH, AS INDICATED ABOVE, ISRAELIS WOULD PROBABLY NOT FIND DIFFICULTY.

6. WE BELIEVE THAT MEASURES DESIGNED TO ANTICIPATE AND PREVENT ANY POSSIBLE INCIDENTS OF THIS NATURE ARE EVEN MORE TIMELY NOW AND EMBASSY THEREFORE REQUESTS PROMPT DEPT REACTION TO OUR PROPOSAL. IF DEPT AGREES, WE SUGGEST THAT IT BE EXPLORED WITH AMOCO HEAD OFFICE ASAP. ALTERNATIVELY, IF DEPT PREFERS, WE COULD TAKE DISCREET SOUNDINGS WITH AMOCO REP HERE TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER THEIR SITUATION HERE WOULD PERMIT SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT.

7. ON RELATED MATTER, AMOCO REPS HAVE MENTIONED TO US THEIR INTENTION TO PARTICIPATE WITH GOE IN INTERNATIONAL LEGAL ACTION AGAINST ISRAEL FOR EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES REPORTEDLY BEING UNDERTAKEN AT AT TUR AREA, WHERE AMOCO HAS CONCESSION. ACTION WOULD BE BASED ON REPORTED ASPECTS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW THAT MADE IT ILLEGAL TO EXPLORE FOR MINERALS WITH INTENT TO EXPLOIT, AS OPPOSED TO EXPLOITATION OF EXISTING RESOURCES, E.G. ABU RUDEIS. STATEMENT MAY
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BE MORE BLUSTER THAN SUBSTANCE, BUT THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT AMOCO IS QUITE CONCERNED OVER THIS ISSUE.
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